

Boston's Latest Public Art Display Can Be Spotted From a Half Mile Away

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Image via Boston Cyberarts

Partnerships often result in something grand, but the most recent partnership between [Boston Cyberarts](#) and the [Massachusetts Convention Center Authority](#) has resulted in a project that's larger than life – literally.

Starting this week, the Boston Exhibition and Convention Center will kick off “[Art on the Marquee](#),” hosting the work of six artists on its massive 80-foot-tall, 3,000-square-foot, outdoor digital display screens. Awesome.

According to the [Art on Marquee](#) website, the giant screens are visible from a half mile away, including from Summer St., D St., Congress St. and the World Trade Center. Over 100,000 people pass by the screens on a daily basis.

The six artists were chosen through a proposal process which began in December 2011, and a panel of Boston Cyberarts and MCCA staff narrowed down the work to these finalists that you can see this week. According to the [Art on the Marquee](#) website, Boston Cyberarts is currently collaborating with digital media departments at Emerson College, Mass College of Art and Rhode Island School of

Design to curate student content for the marquee, and also has to work with other colleges, universities and local high schools.

“By broadcasting this amazing media art as part of our marquee content, we hope to provide a model for future signage and urban screens in both Boston and North America – pushing the marquee content in new and unexplored directions that will please our guests and events while helping establish this program as one of the most creative and iconic in the country,” says James E. Rooney on the website, executive director of the MCCA.

“Boston Cyberarts is thrilled to be working with the MCCA to bring digital art to the streets of Boston’s Innovation District,” says Cyberarts Director George Fifield on the site. “As urban screens become ubiquitous worldwide, the ‘Art on the Marquee’ initiative at the BCEC expands the use of dynamic digital displays for public media art in one of Boston’s most rapidly developing public spaces.”

This is probably one of the coolest art displays ever. As a native-Chicagoan, I can’t help think of the [Crown Fountain faces in Millennium Park](#). I’m psyched to hear Boston is stepping up its public art game.

From the [Art on the Marquee website](#), here is a description of each artist’s work that will be on display:

Nell Breyer – “Falling Men”

Nell Breyer’s “Falling Men” examines the impact of a spatial format (vertical, horizontal, wide, narrow) on our reading of movement. Two male dancers continually fall and land (on their heads). The frames cascade down the length of the tall tower and then spread out across the horizontal bands of video screen below. The video is a single loop, but when juxtaposed as multiple frames and offset in time by a few seconds, they reveal a strong sense of gravity. The sensation and impact of falling and landing will be underscored and felt in different ways through the horizontal and vertical formatting.

Dennis Miller – “Marathon”

Dennis Miller’s “Marathon” will incorporate photographs of runners he took during the 2011 Boston Marathon in conjunction with versions Miller manipulated on the computer. Both versions will be displayed simultaneously, one on each of the two main screens.

John Slepian – “*sigh*”

John Slepian’s “*sigh*” is a 3D-animated, multiscreen interstitial video. In “*sigh*,” the marquee itself appears to come alive and sympathize with harried Bostonians and convention center visitors on the street below. In between the marquee’s standard programming, a 3D animated face (rendered in a style that is realistic and fanciful—similar to many popular 3D animated feature

films) appears over a “color bar” test pattern. The face inhales deeply, pouts its lips and exhales a deep sigh—a facial gesture recognizable to anyone that’s ever had a hard day. The title is also a reference to the “Peanuts” character, Charlie Brown, whose response to life’s vagaries was often an exasperated, world-weary sigh.

Kawandeeep Singh Virdee – “Urban Bloom”

“Urban Bloom,” is designed to convey the microcosm of city movement amongst the deeper, cyclical expanse of space. Spatially, the piece will be divided into panels representing movement in the city with linear cellular automata patterns juxtaposed against panels conveying the environment in which this city simulation is embedded – Mondrian’s Broadway Boogie Woogie meets Villareal’s Multiverse, with particles moving through the border passageways set against fading panels of saturated deep tones of pure color. The piece was developed using custom software to generate the automata patterns and gradual color shifting.

Jeffu Warmouth – “Fall”

Massachusetts-based Jeffu Warmouth is a conceptual artist who creates work that asks the viewer to unravel their relationships to language, identity, and culture. His work incorporates photography, video, objects, and installations, and often uses humor to skewer popular culture.

Ellen Wetmore – “Blue Boy Jumping” & “Pacing”

Ellen Wetmore’s “Blue Boy Jumping” is derived stylistically from her video “Blue Boy Sleeping” which documents a 5 year old boy who was given instructions to “act like he was sleeping.” The result is a cartwheel of activity throughout the video space. Given the vertical orientation of the marquee, “Blue Boy Jumping” – a similar video of the child jumping – will trace his body movements across the screens, leaving patterns of his movements behind. “Pacing” is a work in which the camera sees an actor from the top down while she paces through the video space. Everything is oriented vertically so she appears to be climbing up and down the wall in homage to Trish Brown’s “Walking Down the Wall” at the Whitney.